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PAGE 01 TUNIS 01963 01 OF 02 241058Z

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ACTION AF-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 PM-06 L-03 IO-12 E-11 M-03 SIG-02 CU-04

EUR-20 INR-06 RSR-01 RSC-01 /097 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8371

SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1963

SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S OVERVIEW ON PADM AND PARA REVIEW  
FOR TUNISIA 1972

REFS: 1) DEPT'S A-1616; 2) TUNIS A-80

1. FOLLOWING IS MY OVERVIEW STATEMENT ON THE PADM AND  
PARA REVIEW FOR TUNISIA 1972. SINCE THE EMBASSY DID NOT  
HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT FORMALLY BEFORE THE PARA  
REVIEW AND THE ISSUANCE OF THE PADM, I REQUEST THAT THE  
ENCLOSED OVERVIEW STATEMENT AND THE COUNTRY TEAM EVALUA-  
TION BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE IG/AF.

2. BEGIN TEXT. TUNISIA HAS SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE IN  
1956 PLAYED A ROLE IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS  
OUT OF PROPORTION TO ITS SIZE AND POPULATION, ITS WEALTH  
AND POWER. THIS ROLE -- AND THE INFLUENCE TUNISIA HAS  
BEEN ABLE TO EXERT -- WHILE THEY SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED,  
HAVE SERVED US INTERESTS WELL. TUNISIAN POLICY HAS OFTEN  
BEEN ALIGNED WITH US POLICY. TUNISIA'S CONSTANT FRIEND-  
SHIP FOR THE US, SURVIVING UPS AND DOWNS IN US RELATIONS  
WITH ITS WEALTHIER AND MORE POWERFUL NEIGHBORS, HAS GIVEN  
US A RELATIVELY SECURE FOOTHOLD ON A KEY POINT OF THE  
SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN COAST AND HAS HELPED TO PREVENT  
THIS AREA FROM FALLING UNDER UNFRIENDLY DOMINATION. WE  
HAVE ALSO BENEFITTED FROM A FRIENDLY, RESPECTED AND REALIS-  
TIC VOICE IN ARAB, MEDITERRANEAN AND THIRD WORLD COUNCILS.  
SUCH ASSETS ARE PERHAPS EASY TO TAKE FOR GRANTED OR TO  
UNDERRATE, BUT THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY LOOM MORE IMPORTANT  
IF WE LOST THEM OR HAD TO ACQUIRE THEM NOW; THIS IS ESPEC-

Tunis 1963

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NND 868045  
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Department of State

TELEGRAM

PAGE 02 TUNIS 01963 01 OF 02 241058Z

ALLY TRUE AS WE BECOME MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE MIDDLE EAST, MORE LOCKED INTO ISRAELI POLICY AND INTO THE SUPPORT OF THE INCREASINGLY ISOLATED JORDANIAN REGIME.

3. THESE ASSETS DERIVE PARTLY, TO BE SURE, FROM THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, WHO SEES THE WORLD WITH AN OPTIC SIMILAR TO OUR OWN. THEY ALSO REPRESENT THE FRUITS OF A CONSTANT US POLICY TOWARD TUNISIA AND THEY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO DISSIPATE UNNECESSARILY. WE HAVE INVESTED HEAVILY IN TUNISIA, AND THE RESULTS MAY SOMETIMES SEEM DISAPPOINTING, BUT DESPITE ITS LACK OF NATURAL RESOURCES, SOME ILL-ADVISED SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES (NOW REVERSED) AND A MAJOR NATURAL DISASTER, THE TUNISIAN ECONOMY IS NOW GROWING AND SHOWS GREATER PROMISE. ITS HUMAN RESOURCES REMAIN ITS CHIEF ASSET AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED AS AN IMPORTANT DYNAMIC IN THE LONGER RUN. FROM THE POLITICAL STANDPOINT TUNISIA IS RELATIVELY STABLE, AND ALTHOUGH A DIFFICULT AND CRUCIAL TRANSITIONAL PERIOD LIES AHEAD I BELIEVE IT WILL SURVIVE AS A STABLE AREA. THE PROBABILITIES ARE THAT AFTER BOURGUIBA TUNISIA WILL RETAIN A REALISTIC AND MODERATE ORIENTATION IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, AND THAT US-TUNISIAN FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION WILL SURVIVE TUNISIA'S POLITICAL TRANSITION AND ITS ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON THE US, AND WILL HAVE CONTINUING VALUE FOR US. THESE INTANGIBLES, THOUGH HARDER TO MEASURE THAN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE OR GROWTH, SUPPORT THE PROPOSITION THAT US INTERESTS HAVE BEEN WELL SUPPORTED BY US POLICIES.

4. US POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN TUNISIA ARE SIGNIFICANT BUT DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE. CONFRONTED WITH CHANGING POWER ALIGNMENTS, GREATER PRIORITIES IN OTHER AREAS, AND WITH LIMITATIONS ON OUR OWN RESOURCES, IT IS NATURAL THAT WE SEEK POLICIES AND PROGRAMS IN LINE WITH OUR CAPABILITIES. NEVERTHELESS, WE SHOULD PRESERVE THE ESSENTIALS OF A RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS LONG SERVED BOTH U.S. AND TUNISIAN INTERESTS AND IS THE RESULT OF SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INVESTMENT. THE RELATIVE PREDOMINANCE OF THE UNITED STATES IN TUNISIAN DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE HAS DECLINED, AND OTHER DONORS IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD BANK HAVE RISEN IN IMPORTANCE, WHICH IS AS IT SHOULD BE. U.S. POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN TUNISIA IS ALREADY UNDERGOING A SUBTLE DECLINE, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THE U.S. IS INCREASINGLY SEEN AS THE ONLY REAL SUP-

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**TELEGRAM**

PAGE 03 TUNIS 01963 01 OF 02 241058Z

PORTER FOR ISRAEL IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT, AN ISSUE  
WHICH SHARPLY AFFECTS TUNISIAN OPINION AND INCREASINGLY  
INFLUENCES TUNISIAN POLICY.

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Department of State

TELEGRAM

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

325

PAGE 01 TUNIS 01963 02 OF 02 241114Z

10  
ACTION AF-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 PM-06 L-03 IO-12 E-11 M-03 SIG-02 CU-04

EUR-20 INR-06 RSR-01 RSC-01 /097 W

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R 241015Z APR 72  
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8372

SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1963

5. ALTHOUGH TUNISIAN ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN DISAPPOINTING, CERTAIN EXTENUATING OR EXPLANATORY CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE BEEN NOTED AND THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK IN THE SHORT TO MEDIUM-TERM SEEMS MORE PROMISING THAN SUGGESTED IN THE PADM. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT HAS BROKEN WITH THE ERRORS OF THE PAST, AND ITS SUCCESSORS WILL PROBABLY CARRY ON. IN THIS EVOLVING SITUATION THE GOT'S COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH SHOULD NOT BE PREMATURELY UNDERMINED BY AN ABRUPT REDUCTION IN AID OR UNREALISTIC STANDARDS FOR TYING AID TO SPECIFICS OF TUNISIAN PERFORMANCE. OTHER DONORS, INCLUDING THE WORLD BANK, ARE NOT LIKELY TO PRESS THE TUNISIANS ON MAJOR ECONOMIC POLICY ISSUES OR EVEN AGREE ON THE REFORMS REQUIRED. I AGREE THAT WE SHOULD SEEK TO REDUCE OUR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ROLE GRADUALLY RELATIVE TO THOSE OF OTHER DONORS, BUT IN DOING SO WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT OUR LEVERAGE WILL BE LESS. DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE OTHER DONORS TO INCREASE THEIR AID AND TO BETTER COORDINATE AID, OUR EXPECTATIONS ON THESE SCORES SHOULD BE MODEST AND SHOULD SHAPE OUR ASSISTANCE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS. NO OTHER LIKELY SOURCES WILL PROVIDE THE LEVEL AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE NOW PROVIDED BY THE U.S. DECISIONS ON OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS SHOULD REFLECT THESE REALITIES AND THE BROADER POLICY ELEMENTS OUTLINED ABOVE AND SHOULD ALSO RECOGNIZE THE U.S. DOMESTIC INTERESTS SERVED BY OUR PL-480 AND PROGRAM OR SECTOR LOANS.

6. A REVIEW OF OUR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR TUNISIA IS ALREADY UNDERWAY AT USAID AIMING AT A GRADUAL PHASING-DOWN OF AID LEVELS. BUT IT IS PREMATURE NOW TO DEFINE THE

30

NNQ 868045  
By SD7/VSW Date 7/20/88



Department of State

TELEGRAM

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

PAGE 02 TUNIS 01963 02 OF 02 241114Z

BASIS AND PROSPECTS FOR EVENTUAL PHASING-OUT OF AID AND TO EXPECT THE 1972 CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING TO BRING FORTH EITHER A FULLY SATISFACTORY TUNISIAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN OR A COORDINATED DONOR VIEW ON THE LONGER FUTURE. THESE COMMENTS DO NOT RUN COUNTER TO THE BROAD INTENT OF THE PADM BUT POINT UP PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING TIMING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR POLICY. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PRESS THE WORLD BANK TO LEAD, AND INTENSIFY OUR BILATERAL EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER DONORS, BUT NOT EXPECT THE DEGREE OF PROGRESS SUGGESTED IN THE PADM AND PARA REVIEW. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO KEEP U.S. DEVELOPMENT AID POLICY, INCLUDING THE IMPORTANT PEACE CORPS PROGRAM HERE, FOCUSED ON THE KEY AREAS OF AGRICULTURE (WHICH SERVES BOTH TUNISIAN AND U.S. INTERESTS CONCRETELY), FAMILY PLANNING, NUTRITION, AND EDUCATION.

7. RECOGNIZING THAT TUNISIA HAS DEPENDED PRIMARILY ON U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE, WE SHOULD KEEP OUR MILITARY ASSISTANCE AT A REASONABLE LEVEL IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS WHILE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OUR DOMESTIC PROBLEMS IN THIS AREA. WITH OUR RECENT TURN-DOWN OF TUNISIA'S SPECIAL REQUEST FOR INTERNAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND OUR REJECTION OF THEIR REQUEST FOR A SMALL CONTINUING PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM, WE SHOULD AVOID ABRUPT REDUCTIONS IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE. IN WORKING TOWARD ELIMINATION OF MATERIAL GRANT AID AFTER FY 75, WE SHOULD ACTIVELY ENCOURAGE TUNISIA TO CONSIDER FMS CREDIT PURCHASES BUT AIM AT AN ANNUAL MAP OF \$3 MILLION IN THE MEANTIME.

8. AS WE GRADUALLY REDUCE ASSISTANCE, WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE GREATER IMPORTANCE OF OUR EFFECTIVE CULTURAL AND INFORMATION PROGRAMS IN TUNISIA IN ORDER TO BUILD ON WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SINCE TUNISIAN INDEPENDENCE, INCLUDING CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR AN EFFECTIVE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAM THROUGH PEACE CORPS OR OTHER MEANS.

9. IN THE LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S SUGGESTION IN A FEBRUARY 1972 LETTER TO PRESIDENT NIXON THAT THERE BE A HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW OF US-GOT RELATIONS TAKES ON ADDED IMPORTANCE. IN THE PAST THERE HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY FREQUENT EXCHANGES OF VISITS AT THE CHIEF OF STATE LEVEL BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUCH VISITS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS FOR A VARIETY OF UNDERSTANDABLE REASONS. I RECOMMEND HIGH-LEVEL

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PAGE 03 TUNIS 01963 02 OF 02 241114Z

TALKS AT THE CHIEF OF STATE OR PRIME MINISTER LEVEL (DEPEND-  
ING ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS HERE) BE PLANNED FOR THE FIRST  
HALF OF 1973. I FURTHERMORE RECOMMEND THAT THE LINES OF  
US POLICY TOWARDS TUNISIA LAID OUT IN PRESIDENT NIXON'S  
MARCH 14 LETTER TO BOURGUIBA, AND THE INTERPRETATION PLACED  
ON THEM BY BOURGUIBA AS REPORTED IN TUNIS EXDIS 1852, BE  
FULLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE NEXT STAGE OF POLICY REVIEW  
ON TUNISIA. END TEXT.  
CALHOUN